# Met Office announces collaboration with NatWest

**08 September 2012 - As increasing numbers of farmers and landowners are looking to renewable energy to boost their income and make their land more efficient, the Met Office announces it is collaborating with NatWest to provide NatWest-funded renewable energy projects access to the most accurate wind speed data.**

Farmers and landowners who are seeking financial support from NatWest's Renewable Energy Fund will be encouraged to commission a Met Office report, called Virtual Met Mast™, which defines how much wind can be relied upon at specific locations, in order to secure funding.

Wind speed data is instrumental in accurately assessing the viability and profitability of a wind turbine project and ensures customers have all the information they need at the start of the project. Thanks to technological advances, developers of any scale can now benefit from the Met Office's modelling technology.

Virtual Met Mast™ is a scientific model based on the Met Office's advanced atmospheric weather forecast system, which analyses wind information to generate accurate, long-term wind climatology at a specific site and turbine hub height. The resulting analysis shows whether the proposed development will generate enough wind to make the investment worthwhile.

Stephen Norman, Senior Met Office wind consultant, said: "Before Virtual Met Mast™, there was no quick, accurate and cost effective method for getting the information needed to work out how viable a potential wind project would be. The only options were to put up a mast for a year, which is very expensive, and to buy long-term data from a Met Office station, which could be 50 miles or more away from the site in question.

"Virtual Met Mast™ enables the developer or investor to obtain a more accurate wind speed prediction for a particular site, so reducing the risk surrounding wind speed estimates. This can help someone planning a wind project to better establish the right site and size of turbine required, and gives all parties a greater peace of mind when assessing the risks associated with the investment."

NatWest's renewable energy fund supports businesses looking to install wind turbines and solar panels. Recent data from a survey conducted this year by NatWest and the NFU revealed that demand is extremely high for funding to support this sector, with an impressive 30 per cent of farmers across England and Wales already involved in renewable energy projects, which is contributing significantly to the UK target of producing 15 per cent renewable energy by 2020.

Rob Harrison, Head of Renewables at the Met Office said: "It is a high priority for us to partner with established businesses in the renewables field as it reinforces our commitment to the sector and demonstrates our work within this market. We think that Virtual Met Mast™ is essential to any wind project - so it is a great testament that NatWest has chosen to collaborate with us, in order for the bank's customers to benefit from the Virtual Met Mast™ intelligence."

Since the launch of its dedicated £50million renewable energy fund last year, NatWest has already provided £24.4million to support renewable energy projects. Ian Burrow, Head of Agriculture and Renewable energy at NatWest, said: "Renewable energy technologies are becoming increasingly attractive as farmers and landowners recognise the potential of renewable energy and the chance to reduce both their reliance on fossil fuels and reduce costs, as well as having a positive environmental impact. We remain committed to supporting these projects and have been working with the Met Office to provide our customers with as much help as possible by offering access to the most up to date wind speed data."

## Contact information

Met Office Press Office: **+44 (0)1392 886655**

E-mail: Press Office

Met Office Customer Centre: **01392 885680**

If you're outside the UK: **+44 1392 885680**

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